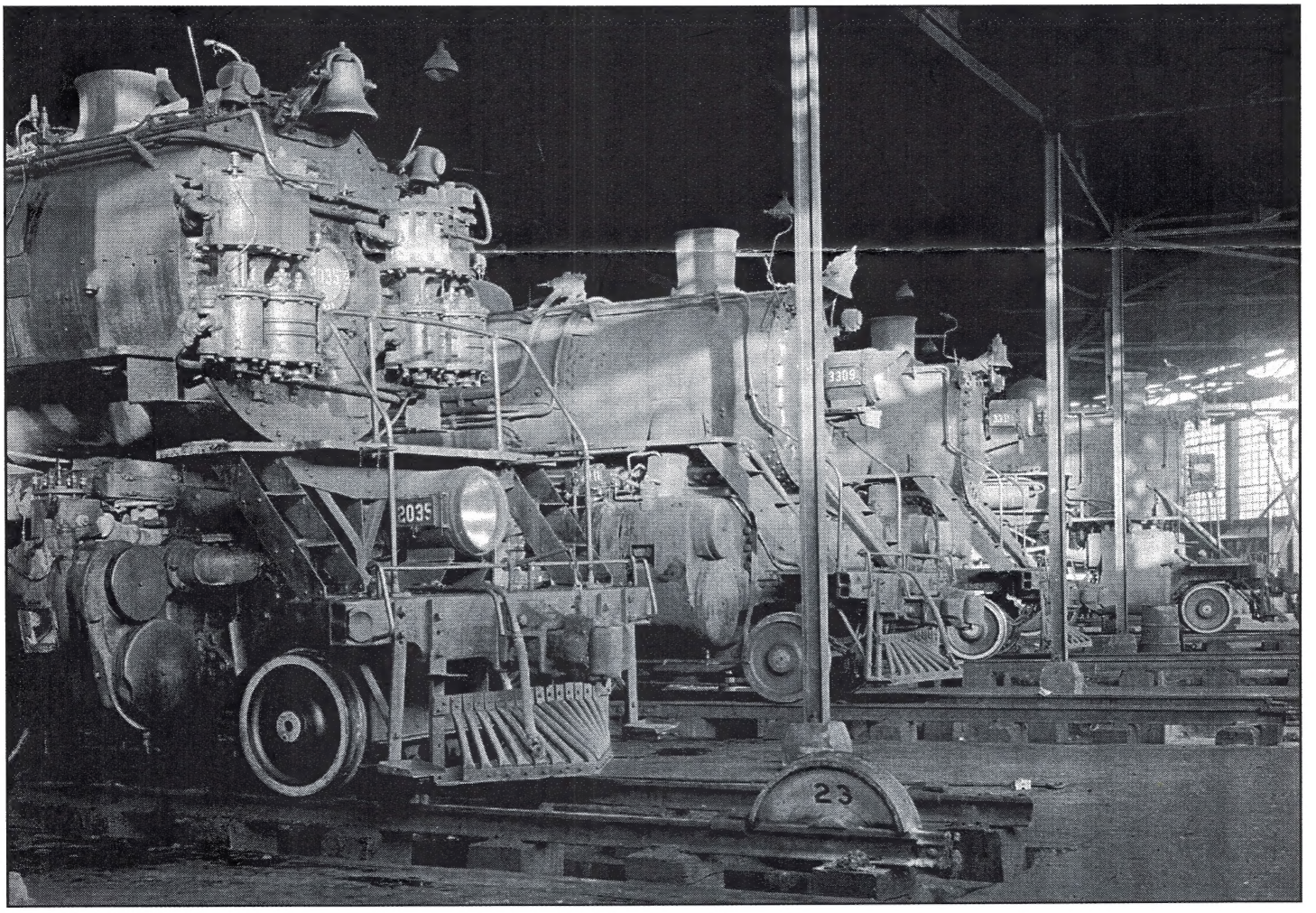
WESTERN RAILROADER

A Publication of the Pacific Coast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc.
FOUNDERS OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM
-&-
THE SAN FRANCISCO CABLE CAR MUSEUM

January / February 2009 Number 687

My Great Mexican Steam Safari - 1960
Part III

Photographs and text by Stan Kistler



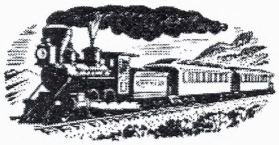
A modern 2-6-6-2, left, at Valle de Mexico roundhouse

We were now comfortably settled in our hotel, The Park Villa and had planned our first day in the area familiarizing ourselves with the railroad scene. Entering this huge city the previous day, we were thrown right into the traffic nightmare, and the Mexican way of driving! For our first day exploring, we all agreed to share the cost of a car and driver for the day. We negotiated a fair price and instructed our driver to take us to the San Lazaro railroad station. San Lazaro was where all of NdeM's narrow gauge trains entered Mexico City. It consisted of a stub-end passenger station, a freight yard and a roundhouse.

In January, 1960, the NdeM was still running about 340 miles of three-foot gauge. The longest line was from Mexico City to Puebla, 192 miles. This line supported one through train a day in each direction, as well as a daily Mexico City-Cuautla roundtrip, Cuautla being the approximate midpoint on the line. There was also a daily roundtrip between Mexico City and Ozumba. Ozumba was about 43 miles east of the City. From the other end, there was a round trip running between Puebla and Atencingo. Freights were numerous, all with 2-8-0s, many doubleheaded. At San Lazaro we headed right for the "Casa Redonda" and entered the office there to introduce ourselves and show our permits. Harold Stewart was fluent in Spanish so he did the talking. While speaking with the man in charge who told us he was the "Maestro Mechanico", a well dressed gentleman entered the office and saw our permit. He started speaking to Stewart in Spanish. Harold translated for the rest of us and it seems this man was telling him his title, and that he was a high official in the motive power department. After rattling off his title in Spanish, he comes out with, in perfect English, "Yes, I'm the whole cheese"! We were all immediately convulsed in laughter, the officer joining in. Needless to say, we had carte blanche after this amusing encounter.

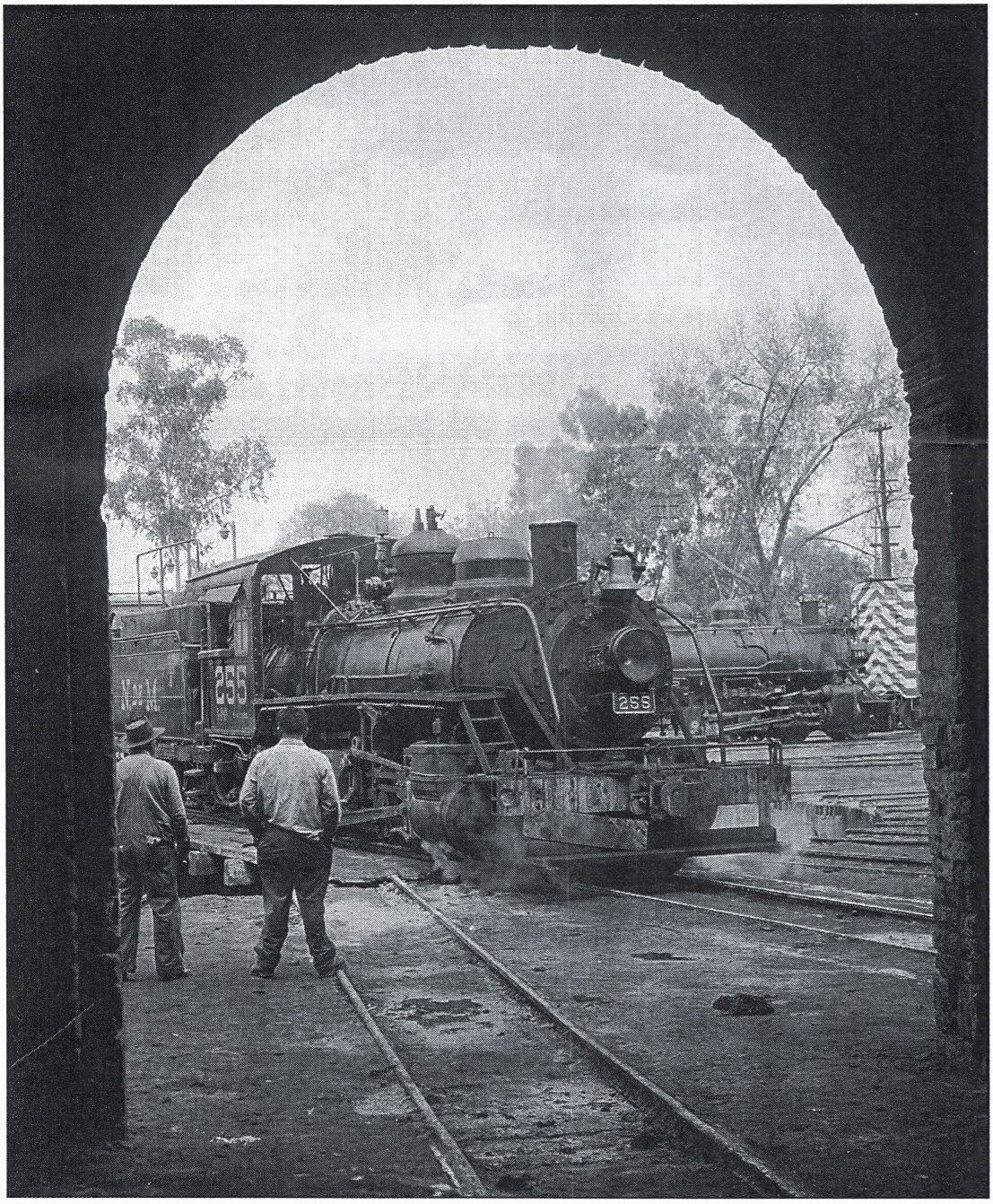
NdeM narrow gauge roundhouse at San Lazaro, Mexico City

See MEXICAN Page 3



MEXICAN-Cont'd From Page 2

Outside, there was plenty of activity to keep us and our cameras occupied. The roundhouse itself is quite old, of brick construction with arches over each stall. When turning engines or putting the engines into the stalls, hostlers make a big production of balancing the engines just right when moving them onto the "mesa" (turntable). It seems that the table was so old and rickety that it would bind while turning if the weight of the engines wasn't perfectly balanced.



Three or four outside frame 2-8-0s worked the yard. Some were lettered with other initials besides "NdeM". There was the "O.M." 145 (OM standing for Oriente Mexicano) and "F.C.I." 76 (FCI standing for Ferrocarril Interoceanico), both lines long ago absorbed into the NdeM system.

Three-foot gauge 2-8-0 255 was 62 years old. At San Lazaro, Mexico City

See MEXICAN Page 4

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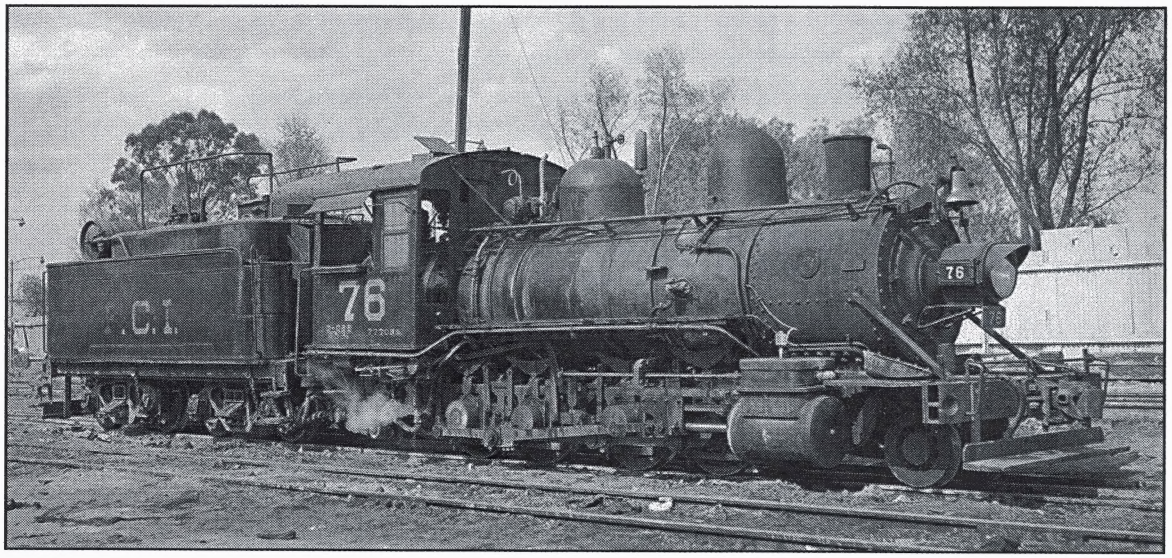
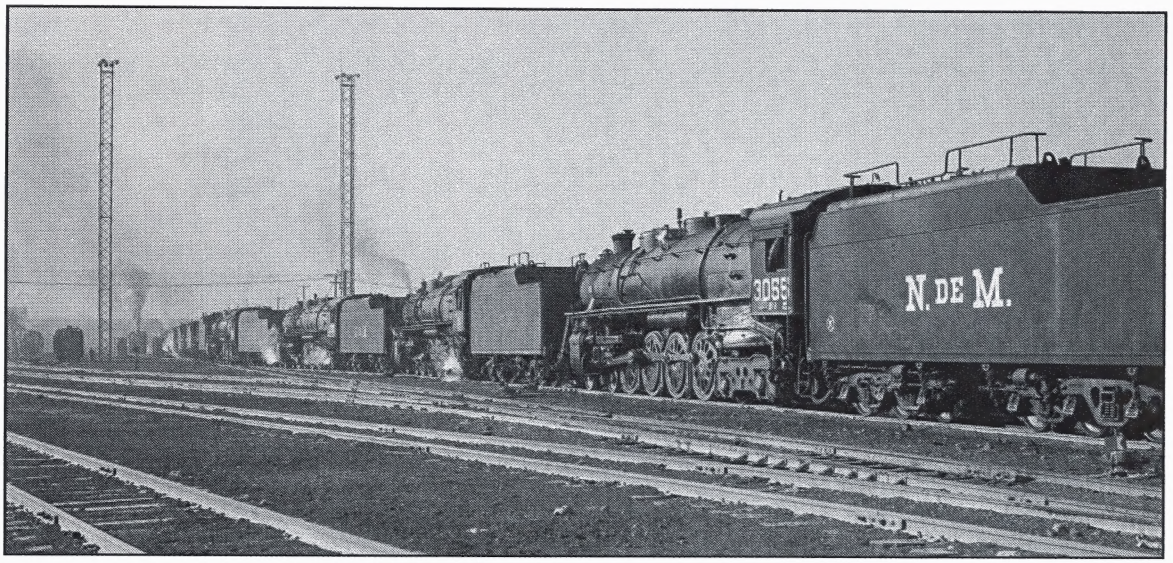


Switch engine at San Lazaro yard built in 1900

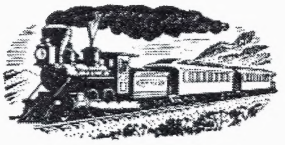
We spent most of the day there photographing engines and trains. One of the only three remaining narrow gauge 4-6-0s took the Ozumba train out shortly after noon.

Back at the Park Villa, we had a very good supper served by the ever jovial Chu Chu and Julian. We started planning our next day. We all decided the next morning that we would brave Mexico City traffic in our own two cars. The driver the day previous had shown us how it was done!



Morning lineup of incoming 4-8-4s at Valle de Mexico

See MEXICAN Page 5



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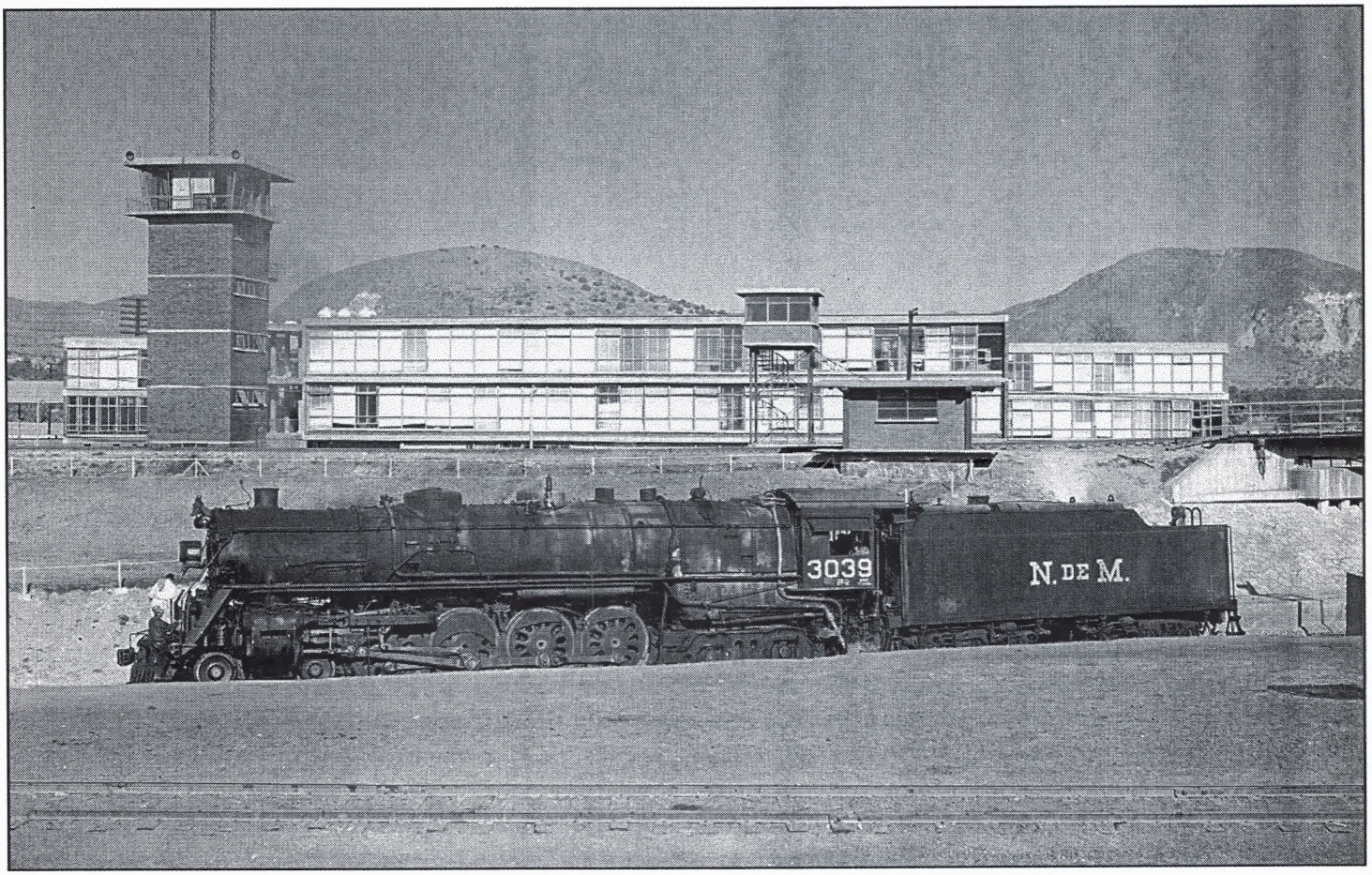
This morning we headed out to the new (1956) Valle de Mexico yard and locomotive facilities about seven miles north of the City. This modern hump yard was about six miles in length and had a capacity of 3339 cars. It consisted of the usual mix of receiving, reclassification, departure, icing and RIP tracks, 117 tracks in all.



4-8-4 3039 under the hump crest at Valle de Mexico yard backing to its train

What we were here for was locomotives, and it did our hearts good to see a modern 34-stall roundhouse FULL of steam locomotives of all sizes, from 60-year-old 4-6-0s to 1938 2-6-6-2 articulateds. The 1946-built 4-8-4s or "Niagaras" were high profile here as they were the predominant freight power for the northwest mainlines. Locomotives were constantly moving about, across the 100-foot turntable, and onto and off of the lead tracks from the yard. We had a field day. The light couldn't have been better and the hostlers were anxious to please us and moved engines in better positions when necessary for our photos.

See MEXICAN Page 6

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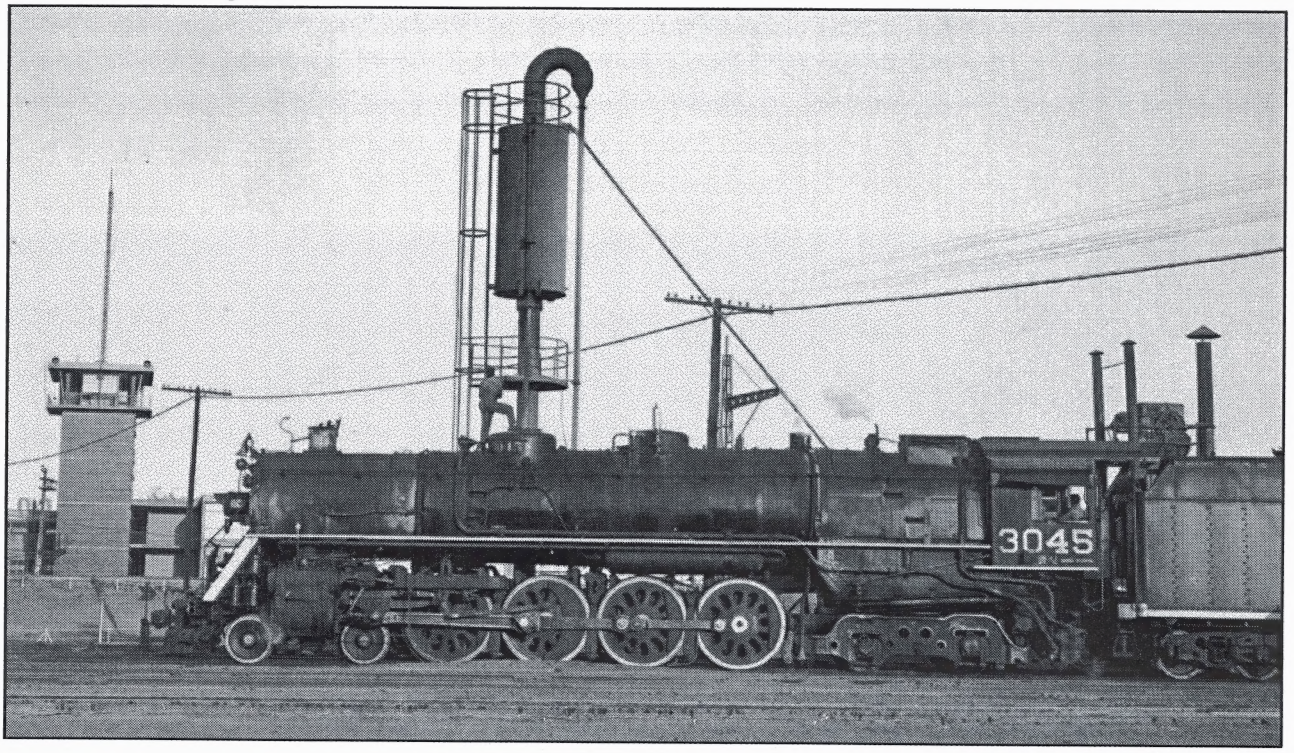
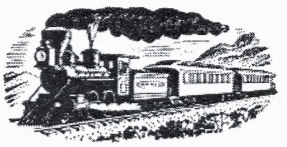


A "Niagara" getting sand at Valle de Mexico

We did see and photograph a few diesels, some rare species long gone from American railroads, such as Baldwin "Centipedes" and high-nose GE U25Bs in passenger service. There was a well-equipped diesel shop at Valle, and the future of Mexican motive power was going through a change, but slowly. I might add that if the railroad yards here in the USA were as solidly enclosed and guarded as Valle was, railroad photography would never have gotten started! The yard is completely surrounded by high brick walls with broken glass embedded in the top, or barbed wire fences, with guard towers spaced at regular intervals along the perimeter. Everyone entering the gates was to be properly identified. It was necessary for us to have special permits, signed by two top NdeM officials, plus a badge to enter the yard. Senor R.S. Martinez, Operating Assistant General Manager told us: "Senors, even I have to wear my badge!" I am assuming the railroad learned a lesson from the last revolution in Mexico.

The next day we all decided to check out the standard gauge line that ran south of Mexico City to Cuernavaca and Balsas. This railroad was once planned to be extended to the fast growing tourist city of Acapulco, but was never funded as we were told. The line hosted a daily passenger train with a schedule of a little over 10 hours to cover the 293 Km. A good highway followed near the railroad for much of the way to Cuernavaca so we left the motel about the same time the train was to leave Buenavista station in "the City". We managed several good photos of the little train pulled by a 2-8-0. Interestingly, the line passed through mountains and pines very similar to what one might see on the Santa Fe through northern Arizona. We only followed the train as far as Cuernavaca, and after a bit of sightseeing there, returned to our motel in Mexico City.

See MEXICAN Page 7



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We were ready to move on, and Puebla, Mexico's second largest city, was our next destination. We were to base there for several days and cover the NdeM narrow gauge lines to the south and the Ferrocarril Mexicano (FCM) a few miles north at Apizaco. Lots of action to follow so keep watching for the next installment.

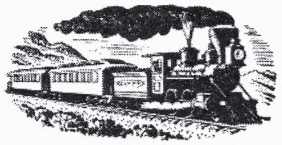
2-8-0 1398 on the Cuernavaca line at Tres Combres

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The Board of Directors cordially invites and encourages any member in good standing to participate by becoming a member of the Board of Directors. The Board meets in the Folsom History Museum, 823 Sutter Street, Folsom, California at 10:00 A.M. and the meetings usually last for approximately 2 to 3 hours. If you are interested in attending a meeting the Board would welcome you. The next four dates are:

March 14, 2009 April 18, 2009 May 9, 2009 June 13, 2009

If you are interested in attending please contact Mr. Dennis Stefani at 916-983-3839.



January / February 2009
Number 687

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The following letters were received by your Editor:

Mr. Jerry Landsman requested information on Francis Guido the original publisher of the Western Railroader. The Editor found the following:

I ran across the August 1986 issue of the Western Railroader and in it Joseph A. Strapac wrote about Francis Guido as follows:

"The seventeen year old Francis A. Guido was a co-founder in 1937 of The Western Railroader, along with John Carrick and Jack Gibson. Francis attended Stanford University, graduating in 1942. He worked his way through Stanford Law School as a local bus driver, graduating in 1945, and commenced his private legal practice in San Mateo in 1946.

Throughout his high school and college years, and for the years that followed, Francis was a "railfan activist," holding positions of responsibility at one time or another with virtually every rail enthusiasts' organization in Northern California. His face was a familiar one at railfan activities and events; so well known, in fact, that he became the subject of a famous cartoon caricature! His principal legacy is the notion of a "railfan journal," especially one published by young men of college age, was a new one at the time, but Francis and his friends made it a success. In fact, they created an entirely new genre of publication-one that is reflected today in the numerous regional publications catering to rail enthusiasts.

Francis Guido edited and published The Western Railroader for forty-nine years, earning through his labors the reputation for his magazine as the senior rail historical journal on the West Coast. Familiar names in the field of rail history were seen for the first time in these pages; mysteries were unraveled; and new avenues of historical research were opened. The efforts that went into producing this little magazine for nearly fifty years are truly a Gift of History.

Now Francis is gone. His publication has been left in the care of the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, of which he was a longtime director. Those of us who take over where he left off owe a considerable debt to him.

/s/ Joseph A. Strapac

From Mr. Jeff Cramer - An email from Mr. William French, Jr.

You probably already knew this but the Sausalito is in Antioch, and at least five old bay ferries have been sold and are being scrapped in Mexico. I'm not sure if any came from Marin or not. You can check out the site:

http://www.cable-car-guy.com/ferry/html/preserved.html#top

Jeff stated further – There is a working scale model of the Sausalito at the Marin History Museum

John Allan Bier, D.D.S. wrote to Arthur Lloyd the following:

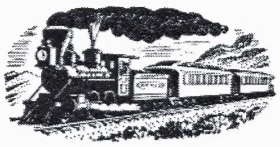
Dear Art,

I should not be imposing on your time by writing you again so soon after receiving your nice letter of 7/12 in regard to Pacheco Pass, but it occurs to me that perhaps this is a matter that will strike a responsive chord.

Enclosed is a copy of page 4, The Western Railroader for Sep/Oct 2008. I would invite your attention to the item regarding the restoration of the N.W.P. caboose.

While it is true that the R.R. used the letters "N.W.P.", presumably to distinguish itself from the "N.P.", the Northern Pacific R.R., the fact of the matter is, I believe, that "Northwestern" is all one word, not two, as the "touch-up" lettering on the caboose indicates.

In the printing trade as I recall, and I still remember a little from Print Shop in Junior High School many years ago,



there ware what is called "Capitals", "Small Capitals", and "Lower Case", usually abbreviated "Caps", "Sm Caps", and "l.c.", I believe.

In the picture of the caboose, the lettering uses Caps and Small Caps. If this is desired, the "W" should be reduced to a small cap (same size as the "e" that follows it, and the space between the "H" and the "W" eliminated, thus creating one word, namely "Northwestern". (Regrettable, the typewriter does not supply Small Caps – we must make do with only caps and lower case in this letter.)

I can find very little in my archives to support this contention but perhaps you and the editors can find further evidence and call the "faux-pas" to the attention of those restoring the caboose, such that the situation may be corrected. All I can find is a copy of an old timetable where the word "Northwestern" is clearly one word.

A bit of paint and a bit of effort should correct the situation. Perhaps it has already been done. It would be a shame to perpetuate what appears to be an obvious (and major?) error.

Kindest regards,

Mr. Lloyd sent the Editor copies of a timetable, first class ticket as well as a ticket for the Redwood Empire Route. In each case the name "Northwestern" is one word.

WELCOME TO NEW & RETURNING MEMBERS

The Board of Directors and Officers of the Pacific Coast Chapter of the R&LHS wish to welcome aboard new members. They are:

Mr. Kenneth Shattock of Federal Way, WA

Mr. George Adams of Sacramento, CA

Mr. Bill Wissel of Los Gatos, CA

DONATIONS RECEIVED

Mr. Rolf St Clair Augustine

Mr. Kenneth A. Barnard

Mr. Bruce C. Bernhard

Dr. & Mrs. Robert J. Church

Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Doyle

Mr. & Mrs. Joyce Everett

Mr. & Mrs. Jerome A. Firpo

Mr. John Frink

Mr. Philip M. Gresho

Mr. Robert F. Hartkemeier

Mr. Richard E. Holmes

Dr. Lawrence R. Ludwigsen, Jr.

Mr. Lloyd M. Limprecht

Mr. Thomas C. Lerza

Mr. Philip R. Landon

Mr. & Mrs. William B. Holmes

Mr. Edward C. Lynch

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel M. McGough, Jr.

Mr. & Mrs. Donald Meehan

Mr. James R. Olson

Mr. & Mrs. John P. Paulin

Mr. & Mrs. Richard C. Robenalt

Mr. David S. Spohr

Mr. Francis R. Shoemaker

Mr. & Mrs. William J. Taylor

Mr. L. Curtis Vann

Dr. & Mrs. R. Michael Walker

Mr. & Mrs. Russell T. Wolfram

Jacqueline J. Pryor

UPCOMING NON PCC EVENTS

March 7 & 8 2009 – Saturday & Sunday, Winterail in Stockton, CA.

May 29 & 30, 2009 – Friday & Saturday, Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society Annual Convention in Oroville, CA

June 2009 – Dunsmuir Railroad Days in Dunsmuir, CA. (Date to be determined)

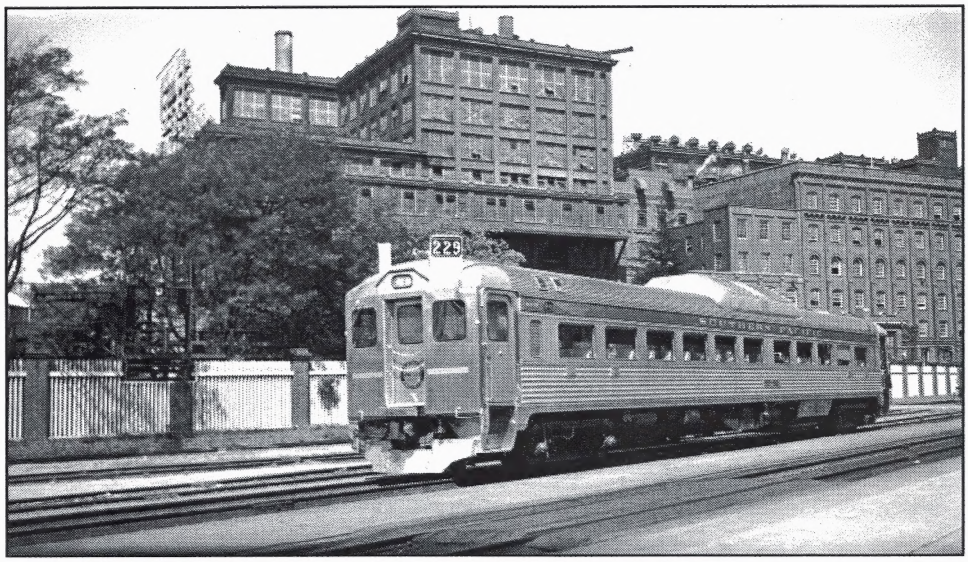
June 18 through 21, 2009 – Wednesday – Sunday, R&LHS Spring Directors Meeting & annual Members Meeting in Portland, Maine

October 15 through 18, 2009 – Thursday – Sunday, Nevada Railroad History Symposium (formerly the V&T Symposium) in Carson City, NV. (Tentative Dates)

October 28 through November 1, 2009 – Wednesday – Sunday, Southern Pacific Historical Society 2009 Convention at the Embassy Suites, San Luis Obispos, CA.

November 2009 – Wednesday – Saturday, R&LHS Fall Directors Meeting (Date & Location to be determined).

FROM THE PACIFIC COAST CHAPTER ARCHIVES



Above is Motor Car SP #10. The photograph was taken at Crockett, CA in 1954. The car was used in commute service between the Bay Area and Sacramento, CA. The picture is from the Fred A. Stindt collection. This picture and others that have been cataloged are available for sale from the Pacific Coast Chapter, R&LHS. Attention Ms. Jan Rodolf, 5810 Hemlock Street, Sacramento, CA. 95841-2308. Fax: 916-344-4325, E-mail: jtrodolf@aol.com

END OF LINE

The Membership Secretary was notified of the passing of Mr. John Friel on November 5, 2008 of Sacramento, CA, Mr. Charles R. Hunter on June 24, 2008 of Oakland, CA and Mr. James Larson on September 2, 2008 of Manassas, VA. The Board of Directors offers their sympathy to the respective families.

Pacific Coast Chapter Needs

The Board of Directors cordially invites and encourages any member in good standing to participate by becoming a member of the Board or volunteer to assist in various projects. Board Members meet generally once a month in the Folsom History Museum in Folsom, California, starting time is 10:00 AM and meetings generally last approximately two hours. Discussions include the operation of the Chapter as well as planning for upcoming events and such other items as may come before the Board. Anyone interested in joining the Board or becoming a volunteer please contact Mr. Dennis Stefani by sending a letter to his home at 114 Coralie Way, Folsom CA 95630-3303 or email him at d.stefani@sbcglobal.net.

We Need Articles

Please consider a contribution to the PCC and your fellow members. If you have an interesting photograph or story, send it to the editor, Irene Lugg at P.O. Box 292927, Sacramento, CA 95829-2927 or via email at bilugg2729@att.net. Editor does not verify articles for factual or grammatical accuracy.

Membership Information

Membership in the Pacific Coast Chapter includes all National R&LHS publications, and the bi-monthly Western Railroader, which is available only to Pacific Coast Chapter members. Dues are $45 per calendar year. Checks, payable to PCC, R&LHS should be sent to Bill Lugg, Jr., P.O. Box 292927, Sacramento, CA 95829-2927. Editorial material should be sent to The Western Railroader, P.O. Box 292927, Sacramento, CA 95829-2927, or email at bilugg2729@att.net.

Attention Web Users

Be sure to check our website, www.mp1.com, from time to time.

We plan to update the Calendar of Events in the near future as well as showing more of our photos from the Chapter's archives.

You can email comments and questions about the website to jtrodolf@aol.com. Be sure to indicate mp1 website in the subject line.

The **FRED A. STINDT** collection of negatives has been catalogued. This collection includes locomotive portraits, primarily of Southern Pacific steam & diesel motive power, with some action shots. Prints Are now being offered for sale.

For more information please contact:
Pacific Coast Chapter, R&LHS Attention: Jan Rodolf
5810 Hemlock Street, Sacramento, CA 95841-2308
Fax: 916/344-4325, E-mail: jtrodolf@aol.com

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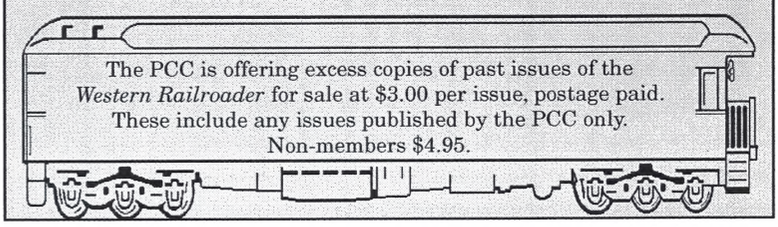

The PCC is offering excess copies of past issues of the *Western Railroader* for sale at $3.00 per issue, postage paid. These include any issues published by the PCC only. Non-members $4.95.

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See inside back cover for Western Railroader editorial address.

Edition 687 January / February 2009

FUTURE EVENTS

February 7, 2009 – Saturday, 12:00 PM, Spenger's Fish Grotto, 1919 Fourth Street, Berkeley, CA, PCC General Membership Annual Luncheon and Meeting. Speaker, Mr. Arthur Lloyd.

July 11, 2009 – Saturday, 3:00 PM at California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento, CA., PCC General Membership Summer Program. Speaker will be Mr. Kyle Wyatt, Museum Curator II.

November 14, 2009 – Saturday, 3:00 PM at the California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento, CA., PCC General Membership Fall Program. Speaker will be Dr. Robert Church, noted Author.

Be Sure to visit our Web Page at:
www.mp1.com!

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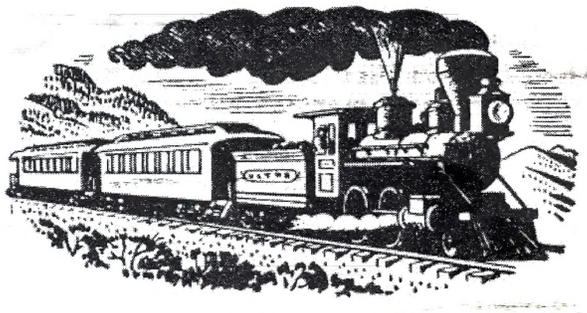

In This Issue

My Great Mexican Steam Safari – 1960 Part III 2

Notice To Members 7

Letters To The Editor 8

Welcome To New & Returning Members 9

Donations Received 9

Upcoming Non PCC Events 10

From The PCC Archives 10

End Of Line 10